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This I Believe

              I believe a family transcends those who are blood relatives. I define family as a group of individuals who share common experiences, beliefs, and most importantly love. My definition does not give any consideration to how you are related to this important group of individuals. It doesn’t matter whether your family includes uncles, cousins, and grandparents or friends, neighbors, and coworkers; if someone loves you and spends time with you then they are your family. Some of the most powerful bonds I have formed in my life are with individuals to whom I am not genetically related.

              My family tree is more of a family orchard. My mother has been married twice. When she was three months pregnant with my brother, her first husband, Dutch Rex, was killed in a work related accident. My mom, however, stayed very close with Dutch’s family. When my brother, Eric, was two my mom met my father, Gary. A year later I was born. I am not related in any way to Dutch’s family. However, the Rex family took me in as one of their own. The Rex clan treated me very well, and I grew up with their guidance and wisdom; I consider them just as much family as any of my blood relatives. After seventeen holiday seasons, countless memories, and most importantly love I can confidently say the Rex family is my family.

              Friends often become your family. I know this belief to be true because after fourteen years of living in my neighborhood, Whitehall, I can truly I love my friends. My friends and I share many wonderful memories as well as some life changing experiences. A family helps care for you when you are sick; in 1998 Mrs. Heinz, a neighbor and close family friend, was diagnosed with breast cancer. After a tough fight and support and care from both my family and the family of other neighbors, Mrs. Heinz went into remission. After the news of Mrs. Heinz's remission everyone celebrated at a neighborhood party. Mrs. Heinz's illness brought Whitehall together. It was the milestone at which we all became a family. Experiences like these bring people together and show just how much they love one another. I can proudly and definitively say that my neighbors are my family.

It doesn’t matter where your family comes from; family that is genetically related is no more or less important than family that it not. My parents have given me an extraordinary life; I am very close with both my mom and dad. Both of them provide and care for me. I value the time I spend with family who share a common last name as much as my family that does not. Although your family may be both related and unrelated they come together to form one family, your family. It doesn't matter how you are related to your family; the only thing that is important is that they are a body of loving and caring individuals.